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HOPI CEREMONIAL FRAMES FROM CAÑON DE  
CHELLY, ARIZONA

By J. WALTER FEWKES

On a visit to the Museum of the Brooklyn Institute in December last, I became greatly interested in two ethnological specimens obtained by Mr Stewart Culin in Cañon de Chelly,<sup>1</sup> Arizona. These objects, to which I have briefly referred in my article on Hopi Shrines,<sup>2</sup> undoubtedly belong to the Pueblo culture. They are not duplicated in other collections, and have a much greater interest than attaches to their rarity, for they seem to verify a legend, current in the East Mesa pueblos of the Hopi, of the former habitation and migration of one of their important clans. They consist of wooden frames with sliding appendages, handles, and symbolic attachments. Their general appearance is shown in the accompanying illustrations (figures 22 and 23).

Mr Culin informs me that these frames were found with certain fragments of masks, a brief account of which has been published<sup>3</sup> in a notice that gives also a Navaho legend regarding the origin of the masks and closes with a suggestion that they once belonged to the Asa clan, a Tanoan people now domiciled in the Hopi pueblo of Sichomovi, who are known to have lived at Zuñi and to have sojourned in the Cañon de Chelly for several years.<sup>4</sup> No reference to these frames is made in Mr Culin's account, and as the evidence of Asa ownership which they furnish is corroborative and more de-

<sup>1</sup> These objects were purchased from Mr C. L. Day by Mr Culin, curator of ethnology of the Brooklyn Institute Museum, to whom I am indebted for many kindnesses in the preparation of this notice.

<sup>2</sup> *American Anthropologist*, VII, April-June, 1906.

<sup>3</sup> "Hopi Indian Masks from a Cave in the Cañon de Chelly, Arizona," *Bulletin of the Brooklyn Institute*, Jan. 6, 1906.

<sup>4</sup> "The Kinship of a Tanoan-speaking Community in Tusayan," *American Anthropologist*, 1894, VIII, p. 164-165: "It is likewise said that after they (the Asa) had lived some time with the Hopi a number of them wandered off to the Tseyi ["Chelly"] Cañon and intermarried with Athapascan (Navaho) tribes."

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cisive than that afforded by the fragments of masks, I have ventured to supplement and support by additional facts the notice referred to.

An examination of one of these frames shows its general form as given in the figure, in which *a*, *a'* is a wooden bar, apparently in one piece, in which are cut two slots (*b*, *b'*). This bar has a round handle (*c*) midway of its length, opposite a terrace (*d*) symbolizing

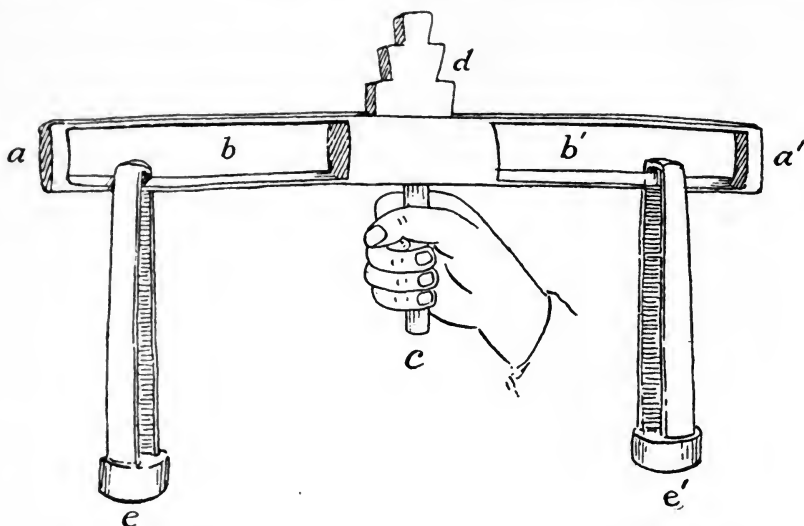


FIG. 22. — Frame carried by Yaya priest. (Brooklyn Institute Museum.)

a rain cloud. Two pendants (*e*, *e'*) slide freely in the slots (*b*, *b'*), so that if the bar be moved violently sidewise, these appendages strike the ends and the middle, making a noise and suggesting a rattle. Similar frames still used by the Hopi in ceremonies at their East Mesa villages were figured several years ago in a picture of a priest introduced in my account of "The Lesser New Fire Ceremony at Walpi," and later reproduced in a series of native drawings of Hopi kachinas.<sup>1</sup> These illustrations represent masked men called Sumaikoli and Kawikoli, accompanied by priests known as Yayas bearing in their hands similar frames.

Apparently Mrs Stevenson refers to frames of identical shape in

<sup>1</sup> *American Anthropologist*, 1901, n. s., III, 438, pl. xi; also *Twenty-first Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, pl. xxxiv, xxxv.

her description of the Shúmaakwe ceremony at Zuñi.<sup>1</sup> She writes as follows :

A charm fashioned of wood and similar to one of the bars of the suspended form above the altar is carried by a young man whenever the Shumai'koli appears, the bearer manipulating the bar before the god, which appears to have mystic control over the Shumai'koli. The writer has observed the same thing among the Hopi Indians.

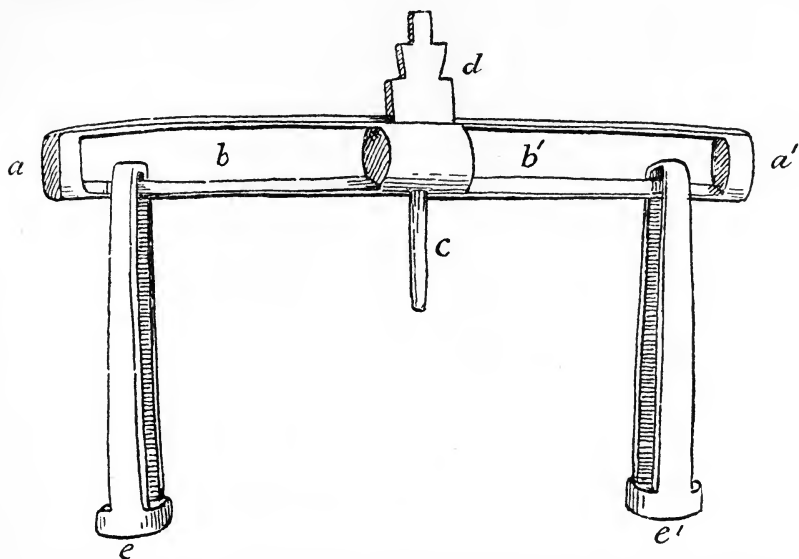


FIG. 23. — Frame carried by Yaya priest ; length 24 in. (Brooklyn Institute Museum, cat. no. 5633.)

The same author says also :

Whenever he [the charm-bearer] waves the charm the Shumai'koli backs off a distance and then starts forward while the charm-bearer vigorously manipulates the charm to draw the god to him.

And later :

The charm-bearer stands south of her [the female leader], facing east, and holds his charm above his face with his left hand and shakes a small gourd rattle with his right, while he sings a low chant, reminding one of the intoning of a Catholic priest.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Twenty-third Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, p. 540, 543, 548-549.

<sup>2</sup> The Saiapa who accompany the Zuñi Shumaikoli correspond in some respects to the Kawikoli of the Hopi. The Zuñi Shumaikoli is of course the same as the Walpi Sumaikoli.



It appears that the main purpose of the ceremony of the Sumaikoli of the Hopi and its equivalent, the Shumaikoli at Zuñi, is the same. Both are fire rites; both were derived from Rio Grande pueblos.

The true significance of these frames is unknown, but the respect paid to them seems to indicate that they are something more than rattles of unusual shape. In her representations of the Shúmaakwe altar Mrs Stevenson figures a cross hanging above it, made of two<sup>1</sup> of these frames united, a symbol that the Hopi would interpret as a sky, star, or four-world-quarter symbol.

Of the nature of the rites that are performed when these objects are employed we may judge in part from a study of both Hopi and Zuñi variants of the Sumaikoli ceremony. The ceremony recalls in several particulars the Fire dance of the Navaho.

The Yaya priesthood claim wonderful magic powers in controlling fire<sup>2</sup> and say they are able to cure certain bodily ailments with its products — heat, ashes, and smoke. Their patroness is the Spider-woman, but they worship also the Sky-god, symbolized by the Sun, and Masauû, the God of Death. They call upon ancestral beings, known as Sumaikoli, distributed in the four cardinal directions, to bring rain, and in the course of their rites they make prayer-offerings to all these supernaturals.

The important point to be considered regarding these frames is their clan ownership. We know that their modern representatives belong to the Yaya priesthood, hence it is desirable to discover the clan kinships or affiliations of this fraternity. The Yaya were intro-

<sup>1</sup> Note that two of these frames were found together in the Cañon de Chelly cave. This would imply that they were sometimes fastened together in the form of a cross, as at Zuñi; but their handles show that they were carried in the hand as seen in Hopi pictures of the Yaya priests. They were apparently rattles, suggesting the *matracas* used for bells in Latin American countries on Good Friday. These *matracas* are commonly carried in the hands and are used during the *tenebra*, but sometimes, as at Jalapa, Mexico, the *matraca* is placed in the church belfry. It is a large wheel with a clapper, and when turned can be heard all over the city.

<sup>2</sup> I need not here relate the many stories of handling fire, with accompanying necromancy, that the Yaya ascribe to their ancients. They even claim to be able to eat fire, or to put live coals into their mouths, which may well be doubted. Their claim to cure bodily ailments with fire reminds one of the principle "*similia similibus curantur*." Burning sensations of the skin supposed to be due to fire are, they hold, cured by fire and its products.



duced into Walpi by either Keresan or Tanoan clans, either directly or by way of Zuñi, and this introduction is commonly said to have taken place in comparatively modern times. The Asa clan, who claim that their ancestors lived in the Cañon de Chelly, are of Tanoan origin and are said to have been related to the Tewa of Hano and of the Rio Grande pueblos. The presumption is reasonable that these frames were Asa property. If such be the case the exact site of the habitation of this clan in the Cañon de Chelly may be determined by the situation of the cave in which the Sumaikoli paraphernalia were found. But the fact must not be overlooked that the present Sumaikoli chief is a member of the Badger clan<sup>1</sup> who are closely associated with the other Tanoan peoples. Moreover, there are two sets of Sumaikoli paraphernalia on the East mesa: one at Walpi, the other at Hano. The latter, formerly owned by the Sun clan, may have been brought by the ancestors of the Hano clans directly from the Rio Grande.



FIG. 24. —  
Sumaikoli  
standard;  
length 34 in.  
(Brooklyn In-  
stitute Muse-  
um, cat. no.  
5631.)

According to *Museum Notes* (the article above cited), there were other ceremonial paraphernalia found in a bag with these fragments. What light do they throw on the clan ownership of the specimens here considered? One of these objects is a peculiarly ferruled stick (figure 24) the use of which is problematical. This stick is, I believe, a Sumaikoli standard, which was placed at the entrance to the room where the altar of this ceremony was erected, for a similar standard is still used at Walpi when the Sumaikoli is celebrated. The modern representative consists of two ferruled sticks with facets at the ends. One of these is like the above-mentioned specimen, the other has a hollow gourd attached at one end. When the secret rites are in progress these sticks are stuck in the straw covering of the kiva to indicate that such

<sup>1</sup> The Badger clan is sometimes called a Hanumnyamu, or Tewa people, akin to the Asa and Hano clans. It was associated with the former in founding Sichomovi after the return from the Cañon de Chelly.

rites are taking place in the room below. The Cañon de Chelly stick is much more elaborate than the standard now used at Walpi and may have served for another purpose.<sup>1</sup>

The evidence drawn from the fragments of masks found with their frames coincides with that of the latter, for like them the masks are preeminently those of Keresan and Tanoan peoples. According to the article cited these masks belong to the Humis and Shalako kachinas, both of which were introduced into the Hopi pueblos from the Rio Grande.

The Humis, or Hemis, kachina among the Hopi is said to have been derived from Jemez, New Mexico. Naturally it is a favorite with both the Badger and the Asa, as well as with all other clans of eastern origin. The material from the Cañon de Chelly is a framework and a painted skin, its former cover, that has been identified as the "tablet"<sup>2</sup> of a Humis-kachina helmet.

A Shalako mask also is mentioned as having been found with the Humis mask. This mask I have not seen, but as the Zuñi Shalako at Sichomovi was introduced from the former pueblo about forty years ago by the Badger clan, the occurrence in the cave of a fragment of a mask with other dance paraphernalia of the Badger and Asa clans is readily explained. The Hopi Shalako was brought to Walpi by clans from the ancient settlements along the Little Colorado.

The Sumaikoli frames and standard, together with the masks and other paraphernalia found in the Cañon de Chelly cave, verify the legends of a comparatively late occupancy of certain cliff-dwellings in this region by people from the East mesa. They point distinctly to the Asa clan as their probable owners. Taken in connection with other evidences they support the conclusion that some of the cliff-houses of that cañon were inhabited in comparatively recent time. The so-called Hopi pottery found in the cañon is not unlike that now manufactured by Tewa potters; and to these people, no doubt, can be traced the peach tree and the presence of sheep, both of

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<sup>1</sup> A similar problematical object was found at Sikyatki and another at Awatobi, which would further indicate eastern influences in these pueblos.

<sup>2</sup> These tablets are now generally made of thin boards, but formerly they were manufactured of skin or cloth stretched over a support.

which prove post-Spanish occupancy by them of this section. I believe the specimens above considered are most instructive verifications of Asa and Badger clan traditions.

It might pertinently be asked, "Why could not these objects have been derived from Zuñi or possibly directly from the Rio Grande pueblos, in both of which localities the Sumaikoli culture exists and in some of which similar paraphernalia are still used?" Migratory bands were continually passing near the entrance to the cañon where the paraphernalia were found, in their journey from the Rio Grande region to the Hopi pueblos, and some of these migrants may have lagged behind or tarried there for a longer or shorter time, and may have left some of their religious paraphernalia in that region. While no evidence afforded by the specimens makes this supposition impossible, the Navaho legend that led to the discovery of these objects is so explicit that we must conclude that the descendants of their owners now inhabit pueblos on the East mesa. Although the Asa tradition of their life in Cañon de Chelly is circumstantial, it is not impossible, considering the kinship of the clans, that some of the Badger people accompanied the Asa when the latter sought a home in that place. At least we may definitely say that the frames, standard, and fragments of masks here considered formerly belonged to Hopi rather than to Zuñi or Rio Grande people, but that the clans which owned them originally came from the pueblos of the latter. Although there is strong evidence that these frames pertain to the Asa and Badger clans, it has not yet been conclusively shown which of these people introduced them into the East Mesa pueblos.

Strictly speaking, these objects are not distinctly characteristic of the most ancient Hopi, but belong to that early culture widely spread over the Southwest from which the Hopi have derived much of their mythology and ritual. They were introduced from those eastern pueblos which have contributed to the Hopi the major portion of their religious paraphernalia, as well as prayers and songs, and their introduction is so recent that even the clans which brought them are not wholly unknown.

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